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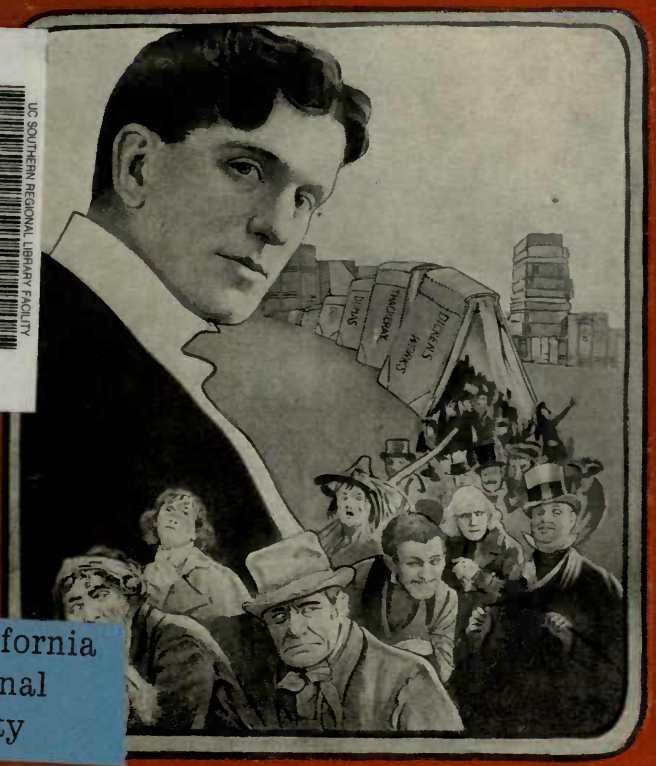
SKETCHES FROM DICKENS

BY

ANSBY WILLIAMS



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MY SKETCHES FROM :: :: DICKENS :: ::

BY

BRANSBY WILLIAMS

LONDON
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1913

INTRODUCTION

THE character monologues contained in this little book have all been played by myself in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and on three tours in the United States and Canada.

The performer can get the description of each character in the novel. No other author ever painted such fine word-pictures as Charles Dickens.

It will be interesting to the performer to study the author's description and then see the various artists' ideas in their pictures contained in so many editions.

In the case of "Sydney Carton," "Scrooge," and "Fagin," it will be seen they are in long monologue sketches and can be done with scenery—at many amateur entertainments these will prove most interesting, and of course are more ambitious than the short "Character Sketch." Each of them has been played by myself in most of the big Music Halls and Theatres.

I have endeavoured in "Sydney Carton" to include the various traits in his character—his recklessness, his love and then his noble sacrifice.

In "Scrooge" (which can be done as a recital) there is first the idea of the man—endeavouring to show the hard-faced, bitter old miser before his dream, the horror and fear during the dream, and then the great change in face, body and voice, etc., after the dream; in fact, the contrast to the opening should be a beaming, merry old gentleman.

In "Fagin" there is a melodramatic sketch with grim comedy. The end as played by me was most exciting—meeting the two Bow Street Runners and the awful fight—finally mastering Fagin.

Each character will be found interesting to the student, and with attention and study of detail a source of interest and amusement to your audiences.

Read up the details of the character, voice and deportment of each; study the published pictures and you will find complete little "Dickens' Tabloids."

B. W.

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SYDNEY CARTON.

A MONOLOGUE IN ONE SCENE.

[A TALE OF TWO CITIES]

CARTON'S LODGINGS—PARIS.

CARTON (*enters drunk—staggers into room—calling*): Nina! Nina! All gone to bed. Well, you drunken good-for-nothing—you've got back at last—prowling the streets like a jackal—jackal—they used to call me that in Stryvers' office in London—and here am I in Paris 'midst all these terrible sights—Paris—followed Lucy Manette from London—as if she needed *my* protection. Hadn't she got Charles Darnay by her side—that she needed me? No. Yet, as the night moth seeks the lamp—I must seek her—though it serve but to scorch and dazzle—Oh, with her love—what might my life have been? Even to have loved her seems at times to rekindle the ashes of my other better self—but then comes the craving Devil—Drink and his brother fiends, Despair and Self-debasement. Yet, after all, I have been of some use. I saved Darnay's life—snatched him from the guillotine—placed him back in her dear arms. Yes, Darnay—reckless as I am. Now they're happy once more—they don't need me now. I should be happier if I could persuade them to go back to England. His life is in danger here. More so now that I have seen Roger Cly, otherwise Barsad—the spy—a turnkey at the Abboye—the man who denounced Darnay in London. Strange how he started when he saw me—again I was taken for Darnay. Strange how like each other—and how unlike. She chose him. The same old Sydney Carton—up one minute—down the next—same old luck. Carton the disappointed drudge. Well, I care for no man on earth and no man cares for me. I've secured to myself the love and attachment—the gratitude or respect of no human creature—oh, I mustn't brood. After all, she pitied me when I told her my secret—how I had loved her silently,

hopelessly. She told me she knew my poor heart was wounded—but that I was capable of good things, even great things, if I tried—tried—oh, why should I try. Come, drink, man—drink and forget—a toast—Lucy Manette, God bless her for her sweet compassion (*drinks, and starts as he sees his face in glass*). Strange how I was startled at my own face—even I get struck at the wonderful likeness of Darnay and myself. Yes, Darnay, I'm your living double—like you—but only in face—I'm the ne'er-do-well, the drunkard, and your sober face reproaches me. You are the gainer—I'm the loser. Still, you're indebted to me for your life. I saved you to-day for her sake. Do you think I particularly like you because I did so. That's a fair young creature to be pitied by. Is it worth being tried for one's life to be the object of such sympathy? Oh, the luck's all your way—you've had everything smooth for you—in birth—in means—in love. My life has been but an empty dream that ends in nothing—nothing. Do you hear me? Nothing. (*Smashes the glass and comes up to mirror over mantel. Sees letter.*) Hallo! What's this? A letter addressed to me—most urgent. Where's the light? Why doesn't the light keep still? Why, it's from old Jarvis Lorry—what?

"Greater trouble than ever has fallen upon us. Soon after the release of Darnay he was re-arrested—openly denounced by Defarge and someone else unknown—as an Emigrant—an Aristocrat—an enemy of the Republic. He was immediately taken before the Tribunal—the hungry, thirsty wolves cried for his head. *He was condemned*, and will die in the first batch of innocent victims in the morning—he is imprisoned in the Abboye. Poor Lucy, poor child, she is distracted—she begs and implores me to seek your aid—prays you to do all in your power to save him. In the name of the love you bore her—she pleads to you. I have been searching every tavern for you (oh, for the shame of it). At last I leave this in the hope that you may see it in time and be roused to action for us. I shall return to Lucy in an hour—she lies prostrated with grief in her father's arms. First I shall go and appeal to the President—Carton, for God's sake—help us—think of some way to

save him—for her dear sake. May heaven support us all in this great trial.—*Jarvis Lorry.*"

Great heaven—Darnay condemned—she distracted. What agony she must be suffering. In *the name* of—*the*—LOVE—I—BORE—HER. Come, come, man, brace up—think what's to be done—think of the time already wasted—wasted by you—now. Lorry has gone to appeal—he will appeal in vain, I know. There's no chance of saving Darnay's life that way—no, none. He must be saved, but how—if I could only get to see him—why, yes, that can be done. Barsad, the spy—he knows I know his secret; but what purpose would that serve? Think, man—every moment brings him nearer his doom. Oh, I can hear her dear voice pleading to me—"Save him, Carton—save him for my sake." (*Kneels down.*) Oh, merciful heaven, help me to save him—show me a light in this darkness of despair—(*rises*)—(*as he rises*)—only show me a way—I'll sacrifice anything—even life itself—(*starts at his face in mirror*)—Great heaven! I thank thee for the answer—yes—it is there in the glass—my likeness to Darnay—everyone mistakes us—even Barsad, the turnkey at the Abboye—even Defarge—and the President at the Tribunal. Yes, that is the way. Barsad, the spy—the turnkey—fears my knowledge of his secret—he knows that if I denounced him the mob would tear him limb from limb. Yes, he must admit me to Darnay's cell. I must drug Darnay, as it would be useless to try and persuade him—I'll change clothes with him and take his place. He must leave the prison as Sydney Carton and I must remain and die—to satisfy the thirsty bloodhounds, as Charles Darnay—die for him for *her sake.* They must drive to the barrier and pass to England. Pass—how can they pass the barrier? He must have a passport—yes. MINE—he answers it exactly. Once away they will be safe and I—well, there's no one to weep for me. Not one in all the world. At last I can do some good. I promised her—I gave my word that I would gladly lay down my life to save a life she loved. Be this the seal of that sacred promise—and may this deed redeem a wasted life. Now a few lines—(*writes*)—

"If you remember a promise I gave you in Paris you

will understand this letter. I am thankful the time has come for me to keep that promise. You shall soon see him again and hold him to your heart. Think kindly of me sometimes—more kindly than I can think of myself. God bless you.—*Sydney Carton.*"

There, now—nothing remains but for me to hurry—first to leave this and my passport with Lorry, then to the prison and take his place. To die—to die is gain—yes, I shall gain their blessings on my name. Farewell, Lucy—farewell, life. The world in which I have done so little—in which I have wasted so much—fades fast from before me. I see the lives for which I lay down my life—peaceful, prosperous and happy in that dear England which I shall see no more. 'Tis for her sake I do it—for her sake—yes.

(*Music.*)

It is a far, far better thing I do than I have ever done. It is a far, far better rest I go to than I have ever known. (*As he stands at door, full light on face and curtain slowly descends.*)

SCROOGE.

A MONOLOGUE ADAPTED FROM THE "CHRISTMAS CAROL."

(Particulars as to dress, etc., etc., see the various Editions with Illustrations.)

NOTE.—This can be done as a Recital or with stage effects.

SCENE: SCROOGE'S OFFICE. (As Curtain rises, Carol Singers heard)

SCROOGE (*enters—takes off hat, cloak, scarf and gloves*).

SCROOGE (*listens*): Bah! Humbug! Merry Christmas—Humbug! Seven years ago my partner, Jacob Marley, died, leaving me his sole administrator, sole residuary legatee, sole friend, and his sole mourner. I was naturally grieved at his death, and shall never forget his funeral. When I left his graveside, I made the finest bargain ever Ebenezer Scrooge made in his life—still 'twas very sad. So once again till Christmas time, when there are beggars here, beggars there, and beggars everywhere. One beggar called at my office this morning. "Scrooge and Marley, I believe?" "Yes. I'm Scrooge—Marley's been dead seven years. What's your business? Eh? Come, come, what is it?" (*Imitating.*) "Might we ask Mr. Scrooge if he would kindly contribute to find the common necessaries for the helpless and destitute poor at this festive season of Christmas." "Did I understand you to say destitute poor? Humbug! Are there no workhouses, no prisons, and the treadmill in full working order. I contribute to these beautiful institutions, and yet you say

destitute poor. If they don't like that, sir, let them die and decrease the surplus population. I don't make merry myself and I can't afford to make idle people merry. Good-morning, sir, good-morning." He soon left me with nothing on his list. I then encountered my clerk, Bob Cratchitt, sliding down the street with a lot of street boys, shouting at the top of his voice: "Merry Christmas, George! Merry Christmas, Thomas! Merry Christmas to everybody!" The idiot—fifteen shillings a week—a wife and large family to keep, and he babbles of a merry Christmas. He should spend the rest of his days in Bedlam. Christmas—Humbug! (*As he sits, lights gradually go down to darkness. Limelight on Scrooge. Sits in chair.*) Strange—speaking of the death of Jacob Marley seven years ago—everywhere I look, I seem to see the face of Jacob Marley. (*Starts up.*) See there—Jacob Marley in the doorway—he crosses the room. Now, seated in my chair. Oh—(*kneels*)—Jacob Marley, why do you haunt me thus? (*Pause—feels empty chair.*) Why, Scrooge, you're an old idiot, there's no spirit of Jacob Marley there—bah! That was a piece of undigested beef. Indigestion! (*Sits in chair.*) Christmas. What is Christmas but a time for paying debts without money, becoming a year older and not a penny the richer. (*Speaks slowly as he falls to sleep.*) Bah! if I had my way, everybody who goes about, with a merry Christmas on his lips should be boiled—with his own plum-pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart! That would be a merry and a bubbling Christmas for—him—bah!—it's—all—hum—bug—all—hum—bug. (*He falls asleep.*)

(*Carol singers heard in street—one verse.*)

(*He then opens his eyes and points—speaking slowly and distinctly—still sitting.*)

See, the ghost of Christmas Past has stalked before me and shown me my own wasted life. It leaves me. The ghost of Christmas Present stands before me and shows me myself for what I am—a wicked, grasping old miser. Yes, spirit, I see—it is true. (*Here he rises and stands*

by chair.) It leaves me, and yet another spirit approaches. The Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come. It is to show me what may be if I do not reform. (*Here he slowly crosses the stage as though he was following the spirit.*) It leads me to a lonely garret and stands beside a bare uncurtained bed, upon which lies the body of a dead miser—plundered—unwatched and uncared for. Oh, spirit, to what a rich end this man's gold has brought him. (*Again crossing.*) It leads me to a lonely churchyard—here lies that wretched man—we stand beside his grave—I am about to learn his name—I fear to, but I must. Spirit, show me the name upon that gravestone. (*He kneels as though to read. Starts up with a scream.*) "*Ebenezer Scrooge.*" No! no! I am not that man who lay upon that bed. Oh, spirit, no! Why do you show me these things if there's no chance to reform. (*Kneels.*) Oh, spirit, say it's not true. Give me the chance to reform, that I may live again the past—the present and atone in the future. No! No! I'll see no more. Mercy! Mercy! (*Falls back into chair.*)

(*Slips out of chair on to knees on floor—continuing the cry for "Mercy!" All lights go up to suggest morning. He is then bewildered as he scrambles to his feet and gazes round the room.*)

Why, what's this? This is my own room—my own chair in which I fell asleep—a dream! A dream! Thank God the time before me is my own wherein to make amends. May God and this merry Christmas time be thanked for the reformation that shall now begin with Ebenezer Scrooge. But stay, I went to sleep last night a miserable old curmudgeon—last night? Why—then—(*runs to window*)—say, boy, what's to-day? (*Boy answers: "To-day? Why, Christmas Day!"*)

Christmas Day!—Then I haven't missed it after all. Merry Christmas, Scrooge!—(*laughing*)—a merry Christmas to everybody. Now then, what shall I do to celebrate this wonderful Christmas? I haven't celebrated it since I was a boy. Now let me think! Ah! I know; I'll write a cheque for the destitute poor and send it to that gentleman

that called here yesterday. Yes—that will be a good beginning, and then to spend—oh, Lord! where can I go? No one will want Scrooge. No one—yes—there is one. My old clerk, Bob Cratchitt—poor old Bob with his fifteen shil—— Hush! Did anyone hear you say fifteen shillings a week? How the devil can a man live on fifteen shillings a week? Well, I'll begin by doubling it. Now—(*goes to window*)—say boy, do you know the poulterer's at the corner? (*Boy's voice: "Rather!"*) Run down and see if they've sold that big prize turkey. (*Boy: "What, the one as big as me?"*) Yes, that's it. Run down and order it for Ebenezer Scrooge and I'll give you half-a-crown for yourself. (*Boy: "Walker!"*) Ha! ha! They'll all be surprised at this change. Now, I'll take that turkey to Bob Cratchitt. How surprised they will be. Fancy, only yesterday, as I walked through the City, people pointed and said: "See that old man—eh—that's Scrooge, a miserable old miser." Now, with God's help and strength they shall say: "D'ye see who that is? That's Scrooge, the Benevolent, the man who cares for the widows and the orphans." Now I'm off to Bob Cratchitt's to make him and his wife and little ones happy—not forgetting his poor little cripple boy—Tiny Tim. Tiny Tim shall be my charge—yes, I'll make everybody happy—so here goes. Here's a merry Christmas to all the world, and in the words of Tiny Tim in my dream:

"May God bless us, everyone."

(*The carol singers commence: "God rest you, merry Gentlemen"—sing to forte—as Scrooge exits laughing.*)

(*During the latter part he is fussing with putting his cape on—his gloves, scarf and hat—so that when he exits he is dressed.*)

FAGIN, The Jew.

[OLIVER TWIST]

THE DEN.—OLD TABLES AND CHAIRS. FIREPLACE.

FAGIN (*enters stealthily, and hastily closes the door and stands and listens; then looks through window*):

All's safe—no one followed—back to the old den once more. I thought I was followed all the way—'twas only fancy. I thought I should never see my treasures again. The boys have all run away. Who'd a-thought that Sikes would have gone and killed Nancy so quick. No sooner did he know from me that Nancy was vatching him and peaching than he quietened her for ever. Oh, what a world it is! Well, it's everyone for themselves now and no mistake. The traps once get scent of the gang and it's up with 'em all. They've all left the old man—aha!—poor old man. They little think what nice nest egg I've got for myself. The fools—I've tricked them all—Sikes as well. Well, once away from here and Sikes strung up, I shall be safe. Now once more—all quiet? Yes. Now for the chimney. (*Fetches box out.*) Aha! There they are, all my little pals. (*Looking at trinkets, etc., on table.*) Clever boys that stole 'em all. Who taught 'em? Old Fagin, who should have the profits—and the fools all staunch to the last. None of 'em never peached on the old man. Where are they now? Some of 'em strung up—no, they never peached. Well, wot would be the good—once the rope was round their neck—peaching wouldn't save 'em. Aha! Capital punishment was the finest invention in the world—

dead men never tell no tales. Dead men! Ugh! Oh, look at 'em—never mind, my dears, you're mine, all mine. S'help me, good goodness—how can I get 'em all away before the runners are on the track? Once I get away I'll repent and turn honest. Yes, honesty's the best policy after all. I'll try and say a prayer to-night; eh, my dears? Last night I dreamed I was condemned to die. I sat in the cell the night before the execution. I fancied I heard the words the Judge said. To be hanged by the neck until I was dead. Then I thought of the many men I had brought to the same end, and joked because I saw 'em die with a prayer on their lips. Some people cannot count the number of their loves, while I can't count the number of my hates. Then with a rattling noise the drop went down, and they became nothing but a heap of dangling clothes. To be hanged by the neck until I am dead—then I cried I was only a poor weak old man. No! no! Then I awoke and found it was a dream—oh, but what a dream. Well, they say, dreams by contraries go. Come, be of heart, Fagin—there's many a good year before you yet, and look at your treasures and all the little yellow boys—come to my heart, ma tears. Well, I must get away from here and prove an alibi, and, if needs must, turn King's evidence—King's evidence—what if that cursed Claypole does the same? He's just the cur to give us away. Oh, if I could only have quietened him. Ugh! the thought of the traps makes me cold. Come, my little darlings—(*kisses them*)—you'll be my pals—once away, I'll care for you, my dears. (*Hugs them and then the money.*) Aha! Aha! (*Then starts.*) What's that?—(*silence*)—nothing, only my nerves. (*Voice: "Bethnal Green murder."*) (*Fagin listens.*) My God—the game's up—he'll peach—curse him—come, man—you must get away. What's that? (*Voices growling and get louder.*) Damn them! They are crowding the street—someone's peached and I'm trapped. Trapped! What shall I do? Where can I hide—hide? I forgot, the cupboard—the trap door to the alley—yes, I can get away there and trick them yet. (*Goes to table, just as he starts to handle the gold and trinkets, the cupboard door opens and a man steps out. Fagin stands and shrieks—then*

snatches his stick up and strikes at the man. Then fight—both up and down stage. Banging at door—door burst in and other man rushes to rescue. Then up—big fight—then each side of Fagin—at last they handcuff him)—Ah, curse you, you dogs!—(*and all lights in building* OUT *and* OBJECT LIME *on* FAGIN *as he sinks on his knees, and curtain.*)

MR. SQUEERS opens School.

[NICHOLAS NICKLEBY]

["Mr. Squeers' appearance was not prepossessing—He had but one eye and the popular prejudice runs in favour of two—The blank side of his face was much wrinkled and puckered up . . . when he smiled . . . his expression bordered closely on the villainous . . . About two or three and fifty; and a trifle below the middle size; he wore a white neckerchief with long ends and a suit of scholastic black. His coat sleeves were a great deal too long and his trousers a great deal too short."]

Mr. SQUEERS (*enters, carrying a book, a bundle of papers, and a large cane. He seats himself at a high desk*).

Silence! (*thumping desk with cane*). Let any boy speak without leave, and I'll take the skin off his back.

Boys, I've been to London, and have returned to my family and you, as strong and well as ever. I have seen the parents of some boys, and they're so glad to hear how their sons are getting on that there's no prospect at all of their going away, which of course is a very pleasant thing to reflect upon, for all parties.

I have had disappointments to contend against. Bolder's father was two pound ten short. Where is Bolder? Come here Bolder! (*shouting fiercely*). Bolder! if your father thinks that——(*slowly, deliberately*) Bolder! you're an incorrigible young scoundrel, and as the last thrashing did you no good, we must see what another will do towards beating it out of you. (*Whack with cane.*) There, rub away as hard as you like, you won't rub that off in a hurry. Oh! you won't hold that noise, won't you? Put him out, Smike!

Now, let's see! (*referring to papers*). A letter for Cobbey. Stand up, Cobbey. Oh! Cobbey's grandmother is dead and his Uncle John has took to drinking, which is all the news his sister sends, except eighteenpence, which will just pay for that broken square of glass.

Graymarsh, he's the next. Stand up, Graymarsh! (*taking another letter*). Graymarsh's maternal aunt is very glad to hear he's so well and happy, and sends her respectful compliments to Mrs. Squeers, and thinks she must be an angel. She likewise thinks Mr. Squeers is too good for this world, but hopes he may long be spared to carry on the business (*here he swishes cane on word* "business").

Would have sent the two pair of stockings as desired but is short of money, so forwards a tract instead, and hopes Graymarsh will put his trust in Providence.

Hopes, above all, that he will study in everything to please Mr. and Mrs. Squeers, and look upon them as his only friends; and that he will love Master Squeers, and not object to sleeping five in a bed which no Christian should. Ah! (*folding it up*), a delightful letter. Very affecting indeed, don't you think so, Graymarsh (*raising cane*) ah! yes, I thought you would—next boy, Mobbs! (*taking a third letter*). Stand up, Mobbs! (*stopping and looking fiercely at an imaginary boy near the desk*). What's the matter with you, eh? What are you doing, eh? Nothing, Sir! (*mimicking*). Nothing, Sir! you young liar, what do you mean by telling me, nothing! Nothing—you sneezed! come over here! How dare you tremble with cold. I'll see what I can do towards warming you, eh? (*Caning.*) Now then Mobbs! Mobbs' mother-in-law took to her bed on hearing that he wouldn't eat fat, and has been ill ever since. She wishes to know, by an early post, where he expects to go to if he quarrels with his vittals; and with what feelings he could turn up his nose at the cow's liver broth, after his good master had asked a blessing on it. This was told to her by the London newspapers—not by Mr. Squeers, for he is too kind and good to set anybody against anybody—and it has vexed her so much, Mobbs can't think. She is sorry to find him discontented, which is sinful and horrid, and hopes Mr.

Squeers will flog him into a happier state of mind, with which view she has also stopped his halfpenny a week pocket money, and given a double-bladed knife with a corkscrew in it to the Missionaries which she had bought on purpose for him. A sulky state of feeling won't do! (*moistening his hand and grasping cane*). Come here, Mobbs! Cheerfulness and contentment must be kept up. Come here! (*canes Mobbs, then says*) there, Mobbs, that'll cheer you up a bit!

Now then! (*opening book*) all of you, attend to me, C-l-e-a-n, clean, verb, active, to make bright, to scour. W-i-n, win; d-e-r, der; Winder, a casement. You spell it,—Right. You go and clean the back parlour window.

Now then, Botany—B-o-t, bot, t-i-n, tin, bottin, n-e-y, bottiney, noun, substantive, meaning, a knowledge of plants, you say that—Right—you go and weed the garden.

Third boy, what's a horse?—a beast,—so it is, a horse is a quadruped, and quadruped's Latin for beast as everybody that's gone through the grammar knows, or else where's the use of having grammar at all? as you're perfect in that, go and look after my horse, and rub him down well, or I'll rub you down (*rising*). The rest of the class go and draw water up till somebody tells you to leave off. It's washing day to-morrow and they want the coppers filled. (*Turning up his right sleeve, moistening his palm and grasping cane, goes ta exit.*) You three young gentlemen, come with me! (*Exit swishing air with cane.*) Come along, boys! (*as if caning them out of room*).

URIAH HEEP.

[DAVID COPPERFIELD]

Oh! Mister Copperfield, it is so good of you to speak to me that is so 'umble. I, Mister Copperfield, am the 'umblest person that ever was, no matter where the other one might be. My mother's 'umble, too—and we live in an 'umble abode. My poor father was 'umble, he was only a sexton, which is indeed an 'umble calling, and now he's a partaker of glory, Mister Copperfield, and that in a very 'umble way, I'm sure. Well, good-bye, Mister Copperfield, good-bye, sir. (*Then, as Copperfield is supposed to leave him, the smile on his face turns to a terrible sneer.*) Ugh! the upstart puppy! Wait, my dear Mister Copperfield. I've got his friend, Wickfield, under my thumb, and soon I'll *crush* him—yes, *crush* him. Then—why then I'll breathe my tale of love into his darling Agnes's ears—his darling Agnes—whom he loves so well. When she's mine—and she will be—she must—she can't help herself, but must help her old father—then I'll teach her who's the master—he! he! I'll break her heart for her—that's what I'll do—break his darling's heart. Ha! ha! ha! (*As he turns he is supposed to come face to face with Copperfield—the awful, villainous expression then gradually changes to the smile again—showing all his teeth.*)

Oh—Mister Copperfield—*dear* Mister Copperfield. I thought you had gone. Good-bye, Mister Copperfield, good-bye, *sir*, and may God bless you, Mister Copperfield. God bless you, sir. (*As he is supposed to disappear he bursts into a snarl and growl.*)

Curse him—curse him. How I hate him—*hate* him—HATE *him!*

WILKINS MICAWBER.

[DAVID COPPERFIELD]

(For make-up and dress see pictures. Description—Chapter XI.)

My dear young Copperfield,—Under the temporary pressure of pecuniary liabilities, over which I have no control, I regret, in fact, sir, I sincerely regret, that I have nothing that I can offer you at our parting, but my advice. My advice may be worth taking, and indeed it may not, in short, I have never taken it myself, and am, therefore, the miserable wretch you now behold—still, my advice is, never do to-morrow what you can do to-day. Procrastination being the thief of time, you therefore "collar him." My other advice is: Let your income—your annual income be—say—twenty pounds, your annual expenditure, nineteen, nineteen and six—result—happiness. On the other hand—income, twenty pounds, expenditure, twenty, ought and six—result—abject misery and despair—the blossom is blighted, the leaf is withered, and the God of Day goes down upon a dreary scene, and in short—you find yourself for ever floored—even as I am at the moment. Still, my dear young Copperfield, the friend of my youth—I always keep up my spirits, as I am shortly, I may say, momentarily, waiting for something to turn up. Farewell, remember at twelve o'clock on Thursday next my foot will be upon my native heath and my name's Micawber.

BILL SIKES.

[OLIVER TWIST]

Hullo! HULLO! Who threw that 'ere beer at me as I come in, eh? Burn my body, if my neck-cloth ain't full o' beer. It's lucky for some of yer as how the pot didn't hit me instead o' the beer—or I'd be settling some of yer—ugh!—I'd a stretched yer—d'yer me?

Hullo! Where's the dog? (*Looking round as though for dog.*) Come here, Bull's-eye—d'year—come here and lay down there. You're getting mighty proud lately, ashamed to be seen with yer guv'nor—lay down and keep quiet or I'll knock yer brains out—— Hullo! Oh, it's you, is it? Now look here, Fagin, don't you interfere—yer white-livered old thief. Now then, keep your withered old claw off my shoulder—it makes me feel as 'ow the hangman's got hold of me—so now you can stow it. Now jerk the tinkler, and while you're about it, hand over a bit o' blunt—d'yer—hand it over or I'll—— Come on, I want my fair share—hand over—— (*Then goes as though he wrenches it from Fagin's hand, spits on it and puts it in pocket.*) And not 'arf enough—you withered old villain. Now, don't you come a interfering with me and my dog agin—I only wish you'd been the dog a couple of minutes ago. Eh? What for? Oh, I'll tell you what for—because the law what cares for the lives o' sich as you—let's a man kill his dog when and how he likes. I'd like to do for you when and how I likes—ugh!—that makes you tremble,

don't it. Now you play fair and square with me and all's well—but if I catch you at any of your dirty tricks with me—— (*Hitches handkerchief at throat to side of ear and drops head sideways as though hanging.*) Then dingle-dangle for you—so don't forgit when you're taking care o' yourself—don't forget, take care o' me—d'yer—ugh! Come on, Bull's-eye! (*Exit as though with dog—leering at Fagin.*)

CAPTAIN CUTTLE.

[DOMBEY AND SON]

—

(*He enters, singing: "Britons never—never—never shall be slaves!"*)

Ha! Ha! Overhaul your factories and workshops, and when found, say *doubtful!*

Hallo! Toots, my lad—I've just given my old landlady the slip—she's a stinger by nature and MacStinger by name. Now, my lad, you've made up your mind to marry, to splice with our Susan! Standy by! Now, I'm not the captain to pilot you in them 'ere waters—but if so be as Jack Bunsby was here. Now, there's the man—he's chock full of wisdom and science. The wisest man that ever put to sea. A reg'lar Solomon. What a heye and what a n'ead. He only says: "Avast there!" but *when* he says it—he just *says* it. All as I can say, my lad, is, overhaul your marriage service, and when found, shut your eyes to the consequences and go it *blind*. Ah, my lad! Woman—woman—what ain't she got to answer for—overhaul your story of Adam and Eve, and when found, see if Ned Cuttle ain't right. Man—what's born of a woman, like a basely fabricated vision, evaporates and don't leave a damn'd rag behind him. Well, we must hear what Bunsby says. Remember, faint heart never won a handsome woman—no. Nothing else worth talking on. So sheer off, my lad, and all clear sailing. May you never want a friend nor a bottle to give him. Avast there. (*Exits singing.*) Eddard Cuttle is my name, and captain is my station—England is my dwelling place, and blessed be creation

MANTALINI.

[NICHOLAS NICKLEBY]

Oh, demmit! There's Kate Nickleby. Now's my time, while my demned ugly wife's away—I know she dotes upon me. Well, she can't help it, my demned hair and whiskers captivate 'em all—the darlings. Oh, I'm a demned wicked lady's pet! Who's this? Ahem! Oh, dem—how d'ye do—how d'ye do. I can see she's smitten already. Well, if she resists these whiskers—she's not worth having. (*Kissing.*) Don't be afraid, my demned wife's not here—so come, my posey—we'll fly from her reach and be demned happy. Come, just one kiss, my popolorum tibby. Dem—don't struggle, you'll uncurl my whiskers. Oh, don't—demnition, she pushed me—oh, my demnition wife! Was it my angel wife come to protect me from that minx? Did you see her try to kiss me? Oh—oh—demnition—did you say I tried to kiss her? Oh, dem! Well, if I speak to her again may my demned whiskers drop off. Is it angry, my love? I wouldn't break your heart for twenty hemispheres populated with little ballet dancers. Now, don't be so demnibly jealous or my poppet will be demnition miserable. You spoil its loveliness and become a naughty demned hobgoblin. She won't speak to me—oh, I'm a demned villain. (*Aside.* Now I must frighten her.) Well, I'll go. I might have married two countesses and a dowager, but I married you—you demned little fascinator. I'll fill my pockets with change of a sovereign in halfpence and drown my handsome self. I'll drop a note in the post to let her know where the body is. (Oh, dem, I must make it stronger.) She will be a lovely widow and I (where's my handkerchief?) and

I shall be a demned damp, moist, unpleasant body—I will—I will—I'll be a BODY. (She's sure to call me back—she couldn't resist me.) Good-bye—good-bye—you've broken my heart and uncurled my whiskers. When next you see me my beautiful hair and whiskers will be demnibly damp and moist. Fare—well. (She's melting.) No—no—you never loved me, you demned darling. Fare—well. Oh! (*Laughing.*) What?—my darling—oh, she forgives me. (I knew she would.) No. I will live—with my soft-eyed gazelle. Let me devour you with demnition kisses. I shall swallow your little body, clothes and all. Oh! what demnition joy—come, my poppet. Oh, what a demned devil I am. I know I shall go to the demnition bow-wows—demnition, but I've won. Ha! ha! (*Exit.*)

MRS. GAMP.

[MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT]

(For dress and make-up see pictures.)

Ah, my precious Betsy Prig—how are you, my dear. How glad I am to set my eyes on you agin, Betsy! Oh dear, what a wale of grief we lives in, to be sure. If it wasn't for the nerve a little sip of liquor gives me—I never was able to do more than taste it—I never could go through what I sometimes has to do. Now, Betsy, my dear, it's about the young man as is ill at the Bull, Holborn. I have mentioned you as the only other person—saving Mrs. Harris—as can do the job. I told 'em that Betsy Prig and me have nursed together for years, turn and turn about, one off and one on. So, dearie, you've got the job and starts to-night. Mr. Mould, the undertaker, recommended me as the most inwallible person he knew—so if the chap dies—I recommend him as doing the burying job, good and neat. "Ah," says he, "Mrs. Gamp," he says, "you are a shrewd woman, one I would almost feel disposed to bury for nothing, and do it neat, too." Lord bless us, he fair give me the creeps and shivers.

I says, "Sir—Mr. Mould," I says, "I always likes to do according to the best of my ability—as Mrs. Harris, my friend Mrs. Harris, says to me, only last week as I see her; she says, 'If ever there was a sober creature to be got for eighteenpence a day for working folks, and three-and-six a day for gentlefolks—night watching being extry charge,'

she says, 'you are that inwallible person.' I says, 'don't name the charge, my dear, for if I could afford to lay out all my fellow creatures for nothing, I'd gladly do it, sich is the love I bears 'em.'"

Ah, my dear, you don't know Mrs. Harris, as I does. Knower her? Bless yer, I knowed her afore her first—when Harris—he was that dreadful timid—went and stopped his ears in the empty dog-kennel, and never came out till he was showed the blessed baby—then he was took with fits, and the doctor collared him and laid him on his back on the airy stones—then his howls was wery organs, my dear, wery organs. Yes, my dear, and I was with her with her ninth, when as how Harris said it was one too many, and perhaps, two—and that little innercent was a-cooing in his face, and thrive it did—though bandy, my dear. Ah! she's a dear good soul is Mrs. Harris, and when she's sick, the only words she can gasp out is: "Send for Sairy! send for Sairy!" She knows me and I know her. She also knows my motto: "Don't *ask* me to take nothing, but place the bottle on the chimbley-piece—or the mantel-shelf—and leave me to put my lips to it when I feel so dispoged."

Betsy, my dear, anyone as deniges of the ability and friendship of that there dear woman, Mrs. Harris, is a twining serpiant.

"Ah," she says, "Sairy, what a blessed thing it is, living in a wale, to be contented. What a blessing, my dear, to make sick people happy." Now, Betsy, my dear, I must be a-moving. Remember how you starts to-night. There's everything at the Bull to make you comfortable. They tell me the pickled salmon is quite delicious—don't forget the cowcumber. The drinks is all good, too—specially the gin and water. Remember, the easy chair's hard, so you'll want the sick chap's pillar. So, now, Betsy dear, I'll be a-going. Bye-bye, dearie, wishing you lots o' sickness and good places.

May we soon meet again and work in a large family, where they all has it reg'lar—one off and one on.

Bye-bye, Betsy dear.

GRANDFATHER TRENT.

[OLD CURIOSITY SHOP]

GRANDFATHER (*sitting in chair*): Hush! You mustn't make a noise—she sleeps—my little Nell. Angel hands have strewn the ground deep with snow, that the lightest footsteps may not wake her. Yes, she sleeps so peacefully. (*Rising from chair.*) Yet, methinks, whilst watching by her bedside, that her dear little face was somewhat paler than usual—so pale, that had I not seen her go to sleep myself, I might have thought—that—she—was dead! (*He then childishly echoes the word* "dead?") Who said that my little Nell was dead? (*Then, with a cry*): Dead—my little Nell—dead—no—oh, no. (*Falls on knees and prays*): Lord—Lord—let her come back to me again to-morrow—let her come back. (*Rises, looks vacantly about, and then, as though by bedside, he with left hand, as though he raises the covering, and with the right smoothing hair from her temples, bends over and imprints a kiss on the imaginary figure of "Nell." He then looks at her and his eyes stare as though he is mistaken—that she's not dead, but sleeping.*) Hush—look—she—she's not dead — no — she only sleeps — yes — sleeps. To-morrow she'll come back. (*Crosses the stage with a whisper.*) HUSH!—she sleeps—she'll come back again. To-morrow —yes—to-morrow. (*Exits.*)

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A Professional Commencement.

His first professional appearance was as Danny Mann in *The Colleen Bawn.* Afterwards he played with stock companies for several seasons at Hastings and Brighton, essaying principal parts and acting as producer. He toured as Svengali, and as Tom Cooper in *Shadows of a Great City.* He was a firm believer in the advice given him by his friend William Terriss, who said, "Williams, my boy, play *anything* and *everything*—it all goes to make an actor!" His first start on the music-halls occurred on August 26th, 1896, at the London, Shoreditch. He gave his famous imitations of well-known actors and others. One night he deputised for Mr. Dan Leno at the Tivoli, made a great hit, and was promptly added to the programme for a run of twelve weeks.

Till that time, mimics had given their entertainments in evening dress. Williams wisely inaugurated an innovation. He had a dressing-table on the stage, and "made up" in full view of the audience, altering each face by the aid of grease-paint and wigs. Among his subjects were Harry Paulton in *Niobe,* Tree in *Trilby,* Wilson Barrett in *The Silver King,* Irving in *The Bells,* Willard as Cyrus Blenkarn, and Shiel Barry as the Miser in *Les Cloches de Corneville.* This latter was probably his most pronounced success. His acting was superb.

Characters from Dickens.

About a year later, Mr. Williams wanted to produce some "Characters from Dickens," but most managers thought the idea Utopian. Ultimately the new scheme materialised at the London, Shoreditch, and registered a greater triumph than even the artiste had anticipated. Naturally enough, all the other managers wanted "Dickens" then! Some of his receptions in the provinces Mr. Williams found even warmer than those in London. Among his

range of Dickens characters figure Jingle, Buzfuz, Stiggins, Fagin, Bill Sikes, Squeers, the Grandfather, Quilp, Barnaby Rudge, Sarah Gamp, Pecksniff, Uriah Heep, Poor Jo, and Micawber.

"Scrooge" was played by him as a monologue each Christmas long before Mr. Seymour Hicks essayed the part. "Sydney Carton" was also played by him as a monologue long before Mr. Martin Harvey produced *The Only Way*.

Shakespeare and Uncle Tom.

In 1902 he introduced characters from Shakespeare, properly costumed, giving Hamlet, Shylock, Henry V., and Cardinal Wolsey. Just previously, he had exhibited different persons from "Uncle Tom's Cabin." portraying Phineas Fletcher, Simon Legree, Topsy, and Uncle Tom. The capabilities of this young actor are truly wonderful; his variety is never ending. After playing this astonishing round of parts at many halls, he found it too hard work, besides being ruinous to his face, as he had to put burnt cork over his grease paint one minute, and then wash it off and make up afresh the next!

Other noteworthy productions include *Hamlet*, as played by great actors and variety comedians; the beautifully-staged *Fra Giacomo*, founded on Robert Buchanan's poem; and *'87; or The Veteran's Birthday*, written by himself (June, 1903).

"By Command of the King."

The crowning point of his career so far was, of course, the command of the King for him to give his entertainment at Sandringham. His performance on this historic occasion included a drama supposed to be played by "stars" at a benefit. Abingdon was the villain, Knowles a village gossip, George Alexander the lover, Irving the father, Wyndham a middle-aged lover, Leno the village butcher and detective, Tree the comedy lover, and Eugene Stratton a black page.

Bransby Williams, being as modest as he is clever, does not say much about his appearance before their majesties in their own home, but the entire press has chronicled it an unqualified triumph. The King showed his appreciation by sending him a present by special messenger, accompanied by a graceful letter. His Majesty's present was a heavy beaten-silver cigarette case and match-box combined, with the Royal monogram in raised gold letters and diamonds, and a crown in gold, rubies, and emeralds.

It was a kingly acknowledgment of genius.

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